

PRESIDENT U THEIN SEIN'S RADIO ADDRESS TO THE NATION BROADCAST ON 2 JULY 2013

My Fellow Citizens,

I would like to inform you all of the developments that have taken place in our country in the month of June just as I have done previously on this radio program.

Out of all the reforms that my government is currently carrying out, all of you are aware that we are working hard to realize what most of you desire— economic development—within a modern national framework. Towards this goal, we hosted the World Economic Forum East Asia Summit at Nay Pyi Taw to reconnect with world markets and to promote Myanmar to international investors. It is the first time Myanmar has hosted a Summit of this nature and caliber. We should all be proud as a nation to be able to successfully host a Summit that was attended by internationally recognized leaders and experts in political and economic realms. I am sure most of you also noticed that those who were in attendance—both the current leaders and the young global leaders who will become important figures in international relations in the future—had lively discussions relating to economic development in Myanmar. This is a strong indication that the international community is watching and is interested in working together with us as we strive to reconnect with the global community. The theme of the Summit— Courageous Transformation for Inclusion and Integration —also conforms with what we are trying to accomplish with regards to the peace process and resource sharing as linked to the overall economic development. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the committee members who were tasked with organizing the Summit, experts, civil servants, university students who volunteered their time, and everyone who took the responsibility to make this Summit a success.

I am, however, saddened to learn about the events in Malaysia where our fellow citizens who are working in that country were attacked. My heart goes out to the relatives and loved ones of the victims of these attacks.

A critical lesson we must draw from these events is that our actions at home have impact on our fellow citizens living and working abroad. Extremist acts by a small group of individuals that uses religion as an excuse to cause fear, spreads hatred between different faiths, and promotes personal political or economic gain from the suffering of others have international impact on the safety and well-being of our fellow citizens. As a nation, we will be resolute in taking action in accordance with our laws against those who spread fear and deepen hatred between groups and communities of different beliefs and we will work hard to prevent future occurrence of such crimes. At the same time, there is a need to strengthen the capacities of our diplomatic missions abroad so that they can better protect and promote the safety and well being of our fellow citizens who are striving under very hard conditions in foreign lands.

However, I am also heartened to see not only our traditional way of people helping people, but local and international civil society and private sector organizations doing what they can to help in these hard times.

To strengthen our efforts to bring about economic development, my government is also working hard for the lifting of economic sanctions imposed on our country. Just this month, the International Labor Organization (ILO) lifted all sanctions and restored full membership

to Myanmar. The ILO was impressed with Myanmar's progress on many fronts including peacefully resolving labor disputes and creating mechanisms for discussions among relevant stakeholders, enacting and implementing laws safeguarding labor rights, and tackling forced labor. Full membership of the ILO will aid not only our country's economic development but also strengthen safeguards of labor rights.

I have been made aware that the July 1, 2013 issue of Time Magazine is causing much anguish and conflict among the public. The cover story of the magazine depicting a few individuals who are acting contrary to most Myanmar, is creating misconceptions of Buddhism, a religion practiced by the majority of Myanmar's population. In connection with this matter, my government accepts that as the country takes its initial steps towards democracy, there may be different points of view expressed by sections of the public and national and international media. Indeed, you will be aware that I have worked to restore freedom of expression, accept plurality of opinions and reinvigorate civil society.

However, like the Myanmar adage "no matter how true a statement, it should not be said if it will not be beneficial and constructive", I strongly believe that the right of freedom of expression should be exercised in light of the prevailing delicate political dynamics and for a constructive purpose.

Therefore, I urge you to use the Time Magazine article as an opportunity to focus on constructive approaches, consensus building, and calming outbreaks of violence. I particularly would like to urge the international media to consider that our reform process must contend with many facets including our multicultural makeup and historical events. I must also stress that the measure of success of the reform process must be one that accounts for the short time of 26 months that we have had to work with. In making these points, my intention is to not ignore internationally accepted democratic norms but rather to invite constructive observations and advice.

Next, I will like to talk briefly about the peace-building work undertaken in June. During this month, I met with a RCSS/SSA delegation led by the group's chairman. We also continue to discuss with the KNU and KNPP, and have increased trust building efforts to aid with peace-building.

You will be happy to hear that these developments to our peace-building process are bringing the prospect of lasting peace desired by our citizens, step by step closer into view.

I understand that you all wish to live freely, without any unnecessary burdens, and have a secure livelihood. I will do everything I can to create a better life not only for you all but also for all future generations.